UYGHUR IDENTITIES – SAGE HANDBOOK OF CONTEMPORARY CHINA

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Introduction

The academic field of Uyghur studies is composed mainly of anthropologists, political scientists and historians, although scholars working in security and terrorism studies have recently also begun to show an interest in the Xinjiang region. Identity, ethnicity and nationalism are themes that frequently surface in their work, right across disciplines, despite the political and practical difficulties attendant to researching ethno-politics on China's peripheries. Much of the published literature has been produced on the basis of ethnographic fieldwork, often and increasingly conducted on an informal (non-affiliated) basis, and always with an eye to protect the anonymity of Uyghur respondents. Some research in this field, notably Starr's edited volume (2004), has led to the state blacklisting of certain scholars (i.e. repeated refusal to grant them a visa), a punitive measure that has been applied to different individuals with differing levels of consistency. Currently (2017), within the context of comprehensive state securitisation of the region, it is almost impossible to conduct even covert fieldwork in southern or rural Xinjiang, where the greater part of the Uyghurs are concentrated.[1]

A modern political history of the Uyghurs

To understand the development of Uyghur identities, and the academic theories that seek to explain them, it is necessary to first locate the Uyghur people in historical and political

[1] Xinjiang has distinct concentrations of ethnic populations. The Han Chinese are located in the wealthier northern corridor (Hami, Ürümchi, Changji, Shihezi, Qaramay, and Bortala), with the highest levels found in the municipalities of Shihezi, Kuytun, Wujiaqu, and Alar. The Uyghur are mainly located in the impoverished south (Kashgar, Khotän, Qizilsu, Aqsu, Turpan) and in northern Ili. In the Xinjiang 2010 census, Uyghurs accounted for 45.84% of the regional population (Toops 2016).

context. The territory today called Xinjiang did not fall decisively under Chinese rule until its conquest by the Manchu Qing empire in the mid-eighteenth century, and thereafter continued to be rent by local rebellions. An initial anti-Qing uprising launched by Manchu and Uyghur officials in Üch Turpan in 1765 was unsuccessful. Then, in 1828, descendants of the Khojas[2] launched a series of invasions of southwest Xinjiang. Unable to overthrow the Manchu citadels, these attacks ended in the 1850s (Tsing 1961; Saguchi 1978; Millward 2004). When rebellion broke out among Hui Muslims in Northwest China a decade later in the 1860s, instability quickly spread to neighbouring Xinjiang, where Uyghurs joined Hui rebels and sometimes staged separate rebellions in the cities. Subsequently, Uyghurs dominated south and west Xinjiang, while the Hui controlled the east and north. In the interim, Yaqub Beg, an adventurer from neighbouring Khokand (located in modern-day Uzbekistan), established an emirate extending from southern Xinjiang to Turpan, which lasted from 1864 until 1877 (Chu 1966; Kim 1986, 2004; Millward 2007). However, in the late 1870s, the Qing re-conquered most of Xinjiang (Millward 2004).

At the end of the nineteenth century, industrialists and merchants in Kashgar, Turpan and Ghulja launched a movement to modernise Uyghur education. Resembling the 'jadidist' ('new method' education) movements then developing in Russian Central Asia, these reformist schools instilled Turkic - and subsequently Uyghur - nationalist ideas in young Uyghurs during the 1920s, and many then joined the uprisings of the 1930s (Millward 2004; Bellér-Hann 2008). In 1931, the predatory behaviour of a Chinese military commander towards a local Uyghur woman resulted in his assassination and the Qumul Rebellion against

[2] The Khojas were a Sufi lineage founded by the Samarkandi spiritual master Ahmad Kāsānī (d. 1542), a member of the Naqshbandiyya Sufi order with close links to politics. The lineage divided into two competing branches, one led by Ishāq Khoja (d. 1599) and the other by Āfāq Khoja (d. 1694). Āfāq Khoja and his followers, the Āfāqiyya, created a theocracy whose capital was Kashgar and which was based on Sufi organization, practice, and ideology. While the regime did not survive internecine conflicts and the Qing conquest in 1759, the Khojas of Kashgar continued to be active in the long term, conducting insurrections throughout the Tarim Basin until their complete neutralization in 1866 (Papas, 2017).

the Chinese warlord administration in Ürümchi. A confused period of shifting political and ethnic loyalties followed, involving the entry of Hui warlord, Ma Zhongying - 'Big Horse' - from Gansu (supported by the Chinese Nationalists in Nanjing), mutiny among Han forces in north Xinjiang, competition among Uyghur armies, and an alliance between Chinese warlord Sheng Shicai (based in Ürümchi) and the Soviets. This led to the brief flourishing of the 'Turkish-Islamic Republic of East Turkestan' (TIRET) in Kashgar in 1933-34, which equally opposed Chinese and Soviet influence (Hedin 1936; Forbes 1986). Advocates of Uyghur independence today frequently cite this as a 'milestone of Uyghur nationalist history' (Millward 2004: 5).

From the early 1940s, the Chinese Nationalists re-established control over Xinjiang, ousting Sheng Shicai and cutting off Soviet influence. Shortly after, in 1944, the Rebellion of the Three Regions (Uy. *Üch Wilayät Inqilabi*) erupted among Kazakhs and Uyghurs in the north, who together with Kyrgyz in the south resisted warlord rule, economic hardship and Han chauvinism among Chinese Nationalist officials (Lattimore 1950; Forbes 1986). Though this rebel alliance was initially characterized by interethnic competition and ambiguity towards Islam, by summer 1945 it had evolved into a secular, socialist government backed by the Soviet Union: the 'East Turkestan Republic' (ETR), based in Ghulja, northern Xinjiang. Under Soviet pressure, the ETR formed a coalition government with the Chinese Nationalists in Ürümchi in 1945; however, tensions remained high, and the ETR is said to have 'continued virtually without Nationalist interference' in the north (Millward 2004: 5). In late 1949, Chinese Communist forces occupied Xinjiang, facing only minor military resistance, which came mainly from independent Kazakhs under the leadership of Osman Batur (Shih 1963; Millward 2004).

This brief political history suggests recurrent themes helpful for an understanding of modern Uyghur identities, firstly, the tension between religious and secular orientations. Take

the 1864 Muslim Rebellion: this was the first instance in which the region's Muslims (Hui and Uyghurs) united against a common non-Muslim enemy (Manchus and Han Chinese), using influential Sufi leaders as figureheads. From then on, Islam became a common focus for the mobilisation of Muslim groups against external rule. However, alliances forged along Islamic lines often broke down once victories were won. Furthermore, divisions in political ideology were perceptible in the north, south, and east of the region. Since at least the early 1930s, Uyghurs and other Muslim groups in south Xinjiang had tended to mobilise political opposition along Turkish-Islamic lines. TIRET, the independent administration set up in Kashgar in 1933-1934, was staunchly anti-Soviet and anti-Han, but also anti-Hui, since most Uyghurs considered this non-Turkic group to be allies of the Chinese (Bellér-Hann 2008: 59). TIRET looked to reformist Islamic regimes in Turkey, Afghanistan, and the Middle East for inspiration and support. Meanwhile, political activists in the north, despite using Islam as an initial spiritual focus, had often been Soviet-educated and tended to advocate a secular secession, even while some Turkish-Islamic partisans within rebel ranks opposed this. Meanwhile, in the eastern oases of Turpan (Ch. Tulufan) and Qumul (Ch. Hami), local rulers voluntarily submitted to Qing encroachment in the 1700s. Apart from the Qumul Rebellion in 1931, there had been no anti-Chinese uprisings in these areas.

Another characteristic of these pre-1949 uprisings was that Uyghurs rarely took the initiative, tending instead to follow others' lead. Again, the 1864 Muslim Rebellions are instructive. Begun by the Hui, Uyghurs in Xinjiang joined in later for their own reasons: a century of Manchu exploitation of resources and labour. Similarly, it took an outsider in the form of the Khoqandi Yaqub Beg to unite Uyghurs and others against Qing rule for twelve years until 1877. Yaqub Beg is today a folk hero and nationalist symbol (with many claiming that he was ethnically Uyghur); yet his popularity among contemporary Uyghurs cannot emanate from his actual policies, which were often detrimental to local interests (Kim 1986).

Rather, it stems from Uyghurs' desire for a leader who could effectively unite them against an outside threat.

Scholarly propositions around Uyghur identities

While Soviet turcologists established a Russian-language field of Uyghur ethnological studies in the 1920s (Kamalov 2007), and some information about the Uyghurs could be gleaned from travel literature on Central Asia written in the 1920s-1940s (notably, *Pivot of Asia* by the eminent scholar, Owen Lattimore, 1950), English-language scholarship on the minority nationalities, as classified by the People's Republic of China in the 1950s, began to appear only in the 1970s. Mostly consisting of broad surveys of the 55 minority groups (population, economy, language, culture, level of social integration) and detailing state policies towards them (Dreyer 1976; Heberer 1989; Mackerras 1994, 1995), this literature lacked in-depth focus on any one group. The first to deliver more detail on the Uyghurs was Schwarz (1984), which focused solely on the 21 minorities of Northern China (see section titled 'Turkic Group'). Later works narrowed their focus to one minority group (the Hui, Zhuang, Miao, Mongols or Naxi), and dedicated studies of the Uyghurs (Rudelson 1997; Gladney 2004; Bellér-Hann *et al.* 2007) and Xinjiang the region (Starr 2004; Dillon 2004) also began to appear. These analyses illuminated questions of identity and of the religio-cultural and socio-economic conditions of Uyghurs living under Han Chinese political control. A parallel approach examined specific social issues among various of China's minority nationalities, and, among these, Iredale et al.'s (2003) volume on internal migration included four chapters focused on the Uyghurs.

Against the historical trajectory outlined in the first section, a dominant academic proposition that circulated until recently posited that Uyghur national identity was largely 'created by the Chinese state'; that prior to 1949 the peoples of Xinjiang subscribed to an

oasis-based or broad *musulman* (Muslim) identity (Gladney 1990). This argument hinged on the notion that, during the staged conversion to Islam taking place over several centuries, the ethnonym 'Uyghur' fell into disuse among southern converts because it was associated with the Uyghur Buddhist kingdom of Khocho in Turpan [Ch. Gaochang, 850-1250]. When in the mid-1400s the Turpan Uyghurs also converted to Islam, the ethnonym 'Uyghur' was abandoned altogether. For the next 500 years, Uyghurs identified themselves according to social group ('merchant') or oasis origin ('Khotänlik' – person from Khotän). Many scholars argued that this tendency reflected the mutual geographical isolation of the oases (for example, Oda 1978). Gladney (1990) suggested that the ethnonym reappeared only in 1921 at a conference in Tashkänt, when Soviet advisors proposed the name 'Uyghur' be used to designate those peoples formerly known by oasis-based names. This proposal was adopted in 1934 by the then Xinjiang provincial government, and the ethnonym was officially reinstated in the 1950s as part of the PRC's nationalities classification project (Fei 1980).

Having conducted the first long-term, anthropological field study in Xinjiang in 1989-90, Rudelson (1997) followed Gladney (1990) in emphasising the continued separateness of oasis identities in contemporary times. He also highlighted cross-cutting social group allegiances among Uyghurs (intellectual, peasant, merchant). He concluded that while shared enmity towards the Hui, perceived as allies of the Han administration, helped Turkic Muslims envisage themselves as one group prior to 1949, today's Uyghurs are Uyghurs *primarily because the government gave them that name*. In this way, Uyghur identity was long conceptualised solely in terms of 'relative ethnicity', and viewed as a reaction to the Chinese 'Other'. The dominance of this theory in the field tended to (re)produce the hypothesis that Uyghurs maintained no coherent group identity prior to their incorporation within the modern Chinese nation-state.

Yet there is now some doubt over whether the ethnonym ‘Uyghur’ ever disappeared. Kamalov (2007) demonstrated that it was in popular use in the 1920s among Soviet turcologists, while in a 2013 interview, a Uyghur historian pointed to archival materials, hitherto suppressed by Han historians, which he claimed demonstrate the continuity of the ‘Uyghur’ ethnonym *among highly educated persons* from the fifteenth through the twentieth centuries. Regardless of whether this material comes to light, the ‘no name, no identity’ theory ignores a host of over-arching commonalities and links between oases that existed prior to 1949.

Situating the Uyghurs between China and Central Asia (Bellér-Hann, Cesàro, Harris and Smith Finley eds. 2007) signalled a decisive shift by framing Uyghur socio-cultural identity as a hybrid located at the nexus of the Chinese and Turkic Central Asian civilisations, but significantly closer to the latter, current political structures notwithstanding. Importantly, Newby’s chapter in that volume (2007) drew on Qing sources to assert that the peoples of the Altä Shähär (‘Six Cities’, contemporary southern Xinjiang) shared a sense of community and discrete identity by as early as the eighteenth century, promoted by inter-oasis trade and marriage, and the Qing policy of population transfer. This emphasis on pre-existing shared resources that pre-date not just the establishment of the PRC in 1949 but the arrival of Qing troops in the Western Regions – has continued. 2008 saw the publication of Bellér-Hann’s historical anthropology of Uyghur collective identity from the late 18th to mid-20th centuries, followed by Dautcher’s (2009) thick description of contemporary personal and community identities among Uyghur men in Ghulja. Smith Finley’s (2013) longitudinal ethnography bridged the gap between the old corpus (focused on relational aspects of Uyghur identity) and the new (focused on intra-group identity) by illustrating how contemporary Uyghurs deploy 500 years’ shared history of common social, cultural and religious norms (evolved since the last Buddhist Uyghurs converted to Islam in the sixteenth century), and a common attachment

to the land developed over a millennium,[3] to both present a positive group identity and resist Han Chinese hegemony. Connecting with Bovingdon's exploration of ways in which Han state nationalism and Uyghur ethnic nationalism compete through a 'politics of representation' (2010: 6), this work cast individuals in Xinjiang not as passive recipients of state representations, but as agents who draw upon in-group socio-cultural commonalities to create alternative identities and express symbolic oppositions. Thum (2014) brought manuscript-based evidence drawn from the seventeenth to twentieth centuries, which shows how the recitation and amendment of sacred texts during internal migrations (shrine pilgrimages) tied the oasis peoples of Xinjiang to the land (across wide geographic spaces) and to each other. In telling stories about Muslim saints and powerful men who worked to spread Islam across the region, and visiting the shrines built to revere those figures, pilgrims laid claim to what one reviewer has called a form of 'indigenous sovereignty' (Byler 2017). Thum (2014) questions earlier arguments about the importance of oasis-based identities, suggesting that while these may have been salient, they were not necessarily preeminent. Most recently, Brophy's history of the Uyghur nation (2016) has mined archival, published and manuscript sources in several languages to illustrate that communal identities across the region had combined membership in a broad Islamic community with a sense of local belonging to the land long before the twentieth century. However, Brophy is at pains to point out that these forms of identity were not proto-national. Rather, the Uyghur national idea was the product of complicated negotiations between proto-Uyghur (Taranchi, Tatar) elites and intellectuals, ethnographers, and local and national Soviet officials. Re-emerging as a clear communal identification and affiliation in the 1920s, it first became a focal point for independence movements in the 1930s.

[3] Until 840, the Uyghurs lived on the steppes of today's Mongolian republic. Following the collapse of the Uyghur Empire (744-840), they began three separate migrations, one of which went west, crossed the Tianshan mountains, and occupied the Turpan Basin (see Mackerras 1968, Haneda 1978, Geng 1984 and Barfield 1989).

Contemporary Uyghur self-identities: from cultural to religious symbols

The ways in which Uyghur self-identities are expressed in contemporary times have evolved in response to changing domestic politics / policies and socio-economic conditions within China and in response to external events. Following the collapse of the USSR and formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 1991, the Uyghurs became the only sizeable Central Asian population without an independent state to their name. Unsurprisingly, the early-mid 1990s saw a rapid growth of nationalist aspiration among young Uyghur males, fuelled by several fanciful predictions. Coined the '1997 theories' (Smith 2000), these included the hope that China would attack Taiwan during the 1995-6 cross-strait tensions involving the US, the expectation that the UK would refuse to hand back its colony Hong Kong, leading to an Anglo-Chinese war (cf. Bovingdon 2010), and the wish that Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's death would lead to a CCP power struggle and large-scale civil unrest. Any of these eventualities could create the necessary conditions of domestic instability for Xinjiang to seize its independence. The mid-1990s thus saw urban Uyghurs segregating themselves from Han Chinese via a combination of strategies (Bellér-Hann 2002; Smith 2002), including:

1. Circulation of negative stereotypes of Han people (based on cultural and religious differences or perceptions of invasion and exploitation);
2. Construction of ethnic boundaries that ensured segregation from Han people (justified on grounds of cultural and religious differences);
3. Dissemination via popular song of alternative representations of Uyghur-Han relations as coloniser-colonised.

Simultaneously, there was a sharp increase in separatist violence directed against agents of the state (government officials, including indigenous 'collaborators'; police; soldiers) and

infrastructure (sabotage of roads, railways, power lines, and government installations) (Bovingdon 2010; Dillon 2004; Hess 2009; Millward 2004; Shichor 2005; Smith 2000). In one dramatic incident in 1996, nine activists stormed the home of a local Uyghur leader in Kucha, and assassinated him, his wife, his younger brother and his brother's wife, cutting out their tongues, in an act of silencing of a perceived 'ethnic traitor' who had failed to represent the Uyghur people.[4] Despite these incidents, the vast majority of Uyghurs have engaged in 'everyday' or 'symbolic' resistance of a non-violent nature (Rudelson 1997; Smith 2002; Bovingdon 2002; Heller 2007; Smith Finley 2013).

Following the Ghulja disturbances in 1997[5] and their military suppression, the Chinese government launched a series of 'Strike Hard' campaigns against 'splittism' (*fenliezhuyi*) and 'illegal religious activities' (*feifa zongjiao huodong*). In the eyes of the state and its majority Han subjects, these disturbances represented a perverse attempt to break away from a benevolent patron. In daring to pursue the 'separatist' dream, disaffected Uyghurs had failed to fulfil citizen's duties of safeguarding nationality unity and the unification of the motherland, and were labelled 'ingrates' (Smith Finley 2011a). Heavy restrictions were placed on freedom of speech, thus any expression of Uyghur dissatisfaction became a punishable offence, labelled 'local nationalist' or 'splittist' (Becquelin 2004a: 375). In Ghulja, a 'Three-No' policy was established: no questioning [the riots], no telling [about the riots] and no visiting [those imprisoned following the riots].[6]

The political frame shifted again after the events of 11th September 2001. Now, Chinese leaders re-positioned themselves alongside the United States and embraced the new

[4] Personal communication with the daughter of a local Party official. See also Beckley (1997) and Bellér-Hann (2002: 78).
[5] For an authoritative account of this event, see Millward 2004: 16–17. In brief, several hundred Uyghurs demonstrated after two *taliplar* (religious students) were arrested for 'illegal religious activities'. Protestors called for ethnic equality and Uyghur independence, and expressed religious sentiments such as 'We have only one God, and he is Allah.' Anti-riot police reportedly deployed dogs, tear gas, fire hoses, beatings and firepower, while riot targets included vehicles, police and Han residents.
[6] Details are found in Classified document No. 175 (Dillon 2004: 95).

discourse of the 'Global War on Terror (GWoT)' (Millward 2004; Dillon 2004; Bequelin 2004b), so that any expression of discontent in Xinjiang – violent or non-violent – was labelled 'terrorist'. Then, in 2002, the public recital of an allegedly 'nationalist' poem during *Nawruz*[7] celebrations in Ürümchi led to intensified censorship of cultural products deemed to have had 'an adverse impact on society.' Chinese authorities began to claim that those now using arts and literature to 'distort historical *facts'* were the same people who had employed violent, terrorist tactics in the past (Becquelin 2004b: 43-44). Consequently, two former means of symbolic resistance– negative oral stereotyping and alternative representations in popular song - were outlawed. Uyghurs found themselves in an increasingly bi-polar world, where they could resist and face marginalisation, or accommodate to ensure personal survival.

Yet symbolic oppositions are necessarily fluid, emerging, adapting and disappearing in response to changing political conditions. This dynamism of symbolic boundaries is 'a necessary element in responding to the ongoing challenges of being marginalised' (Vasquez and Wetzel 2009: 1570). While ethnic segregation (including endogamy) continues to be enforced by most Uyghurs and has strengthened in the aftermath of the Ürümchi riots of 2009,[8] a powerful, new symbolic boundary has emerged in the form of an orthodox Islamic revival. Scholarship conducted since the turn of the millennium documents the return to the mosque and revitalisation of orthodox practice in Kashgar (Waite 2003; 2007) and Ürümchi

[7] *Nawruz* (Persian) is the start of the new year (January 1) for Afghans, Azerbaijanis, Iranians and Tajiks. Other Central Asian peoples and some Uyghurs in Xinjiang have recently also begun to celebrate this day. The young Uyghur poet was Tursunjan Emet.

[8] The Ürümchi riots broke out on 5-7 July 2009. Beginning as a peaceful protest on 5 July calling for an investigation into the Shaoguan incident (in which two Uyghurs were killed by Han co-workers in a toy factory), this escalated into anti-Han violence when the police confronted the march in a heavy-handed manner. The People's Armed Police (PAP) and military were deployed, and two days later, on 7 July, hundreds of Han vigilantes launched a revenge assault on Uyghurs, while many security personnel stood by and watched. According to official state statistics, 197 people died, the majority of whom were Hans, and many vehicles and buildings were destroyed. However, Uyghur exile groups put the death toll much higher, pointing to large-scale police sweeps and arrests during which many Uyghur men disappeared (Smith Finley 2011a).

(Smith Finley 2007b), as well as the economic, social and psychological role increasingly played by Sufi pilgrimage (Harris and Dawut 2002; Dawut 2007). While many in-group practices have long been informed directly or indirectly by Islam, Uyghurs stressed their ethnic (rather than their religious) quality in the mid-nineties. More recently, emphasis has shifted from the ethnic quality of practices to the religious, such that intermarriage is currently deemed impossible on grounds of religion, whereas prior to 1997 it was more often said to be obstructed by different ethnic customs.

This process of re-Islamisation or Islamic revival has gained momentum among a section of the Uyghur population, one which increasingly cuts across categories of age, gender, social/class background and oasis origin (Harris and Isa 2014; Koch 2006, Smith Finley 2007b, 2013; Waite 2007). Significantly, the pattern is equally observable in the regional capital Ürümchi, a city formerly often viewed as a symbol of Uyghur linguistic and cultural 'dilution'. In the southern city of Kashgar, global flows have introduced reformist ideas, broadening local disputes over what are considered 'correct' Islamic beliefs and practices (Waite 2007). This process of re-Islamisation has been largely peaceful and cathartic, and there is a diverse set of reasons behind it (Smith Finley 2013). While some articulate Islamic renewal as a symbol of local opposition to national (Chinese) and global (U.S., Russian, Israeli) oppression of Muslims (see also Smith Finley 2007b), others characterise it as a response to failed economic development (as perceived by those who failed to benefit), and a desire to return to social egalitarianism. While some have returned to Islam as a response to the frustrated ethno-political aspirations of the 1990s (failure to achieve independence along the lines of the new Central Asian states), others did so as a reaction against modernity and a return to cultural 'purity' - a process previously documented for many Middle Eastern societies. For still others, Islam is a vehicle for personal and

national reform in a context where (ethno-) political non-fulfilment is conceived as a divine punishment for moral decline.

Contemporary Uyghur identities: re-Islamisation versus subaltern cosmopolitanism

The perceived 'pure' route to orthodox Islam has not however been taken by all Uyghurs. At one end of the spectrum, we find Islamic 'reverts': individuals who have embraced *bäsh waq* (the five daily prayers), renounced alcohol, cigarettes and drugs, and who link the future of the Uyghur nation directly to personal, moral salvation, as a first step. At the other end, we find (a small number of) deeply acculturated youths, largely unskilled in their mother tongue, some of whom criticise the shortcomings of Uyghur traditional culture, and hanker after all things Han, including in rare cases a Han romantic partner. Between the two, we find an assortment of 'hybrid' individuals who combine chosen aspects of religious and cultural affiliation with a (since 2004 compulsory) Chinese-language education in a bid to survive in an increasingly competitive socio-economic landscape. Among these are the urban 'cosmopolitans': new world citizens, often fully bi- or tri-lingual, who mobilise preferences for Central Asian, Turkish, Middle Eastern, Mainland European and Anglo-American cultural products to reach for positive, globalised identities that are independent of the Chinese state's representational machine and transcendent of national borders (Smith Finley 2011b).

In this complex climate of re-Islamisation, acculturation and globalisation, poles of religious and secular seem to have become more pronounced, promoting increased religious debate in the Uyghur community. Waite's ethnographic study (2007) described a range of Uyghur popular reactions towards Islamic reformists in the early 2000s, including resentful accusation - 'they keep their wives secluded – like in a cage' - and positive appraisal, with reformists described as 'good Muslims who believe in reform (*islahat*) and progress

(*täräqqiyat*)' (2007: 172). The revivalist trend among the public is also reflected in a growing preference for Arabic over Uyghur names (Sulayman 2007; Waite 2007). Uyghur intellectuals, who tended in the past to follow secular ideologies (Rudelson 1997; Bovingdon 2010), have become similarly split in orientation. Some, while acknowledging that religion can form a central vehicle for political resistance, do not view Islamic revivalism as the best path for Uyghurs (Smith Finley 2013). Others have gravitated towards Islamic and Arab culture in their research, and may be experiencing a parallel process of re-Islamisation to sections of the lay public (see for instance Rewaidula and Rewaidula 2004).

The enhanced distinction between religious and secular is mirrored in social interaction. While in the mid-1990s Uyghurs would introduce one another in terms of whether they were Uyghur- or Chinese-educated (a linguistic / cultural distinction), from the 2000s individuals began to base their introductions on *whether a person prayed*. The implication is that if a person actively practises Islam he/she is a good, moral and reliable person. It also appears to inform choices about whom one can trust, with some non-practising Uyghurs seen as potential *espion* (spies) (Hess 2009; Smith Finley 2013). By 2004, many Uyghur restaurants in the regional capital Ürümchi consisted of two storeys, with smokers and drinkers of alcohol seated on one floor and those who abstain seated on the other. This new system is not limited to Xinjiang, but extends to Uyghur migrant communities in eastern China; similar practices could be observed in a Uyghur restaurant and dance venue in Shanghai in 2013.

Yet the divides between nominal, partially observant and strictly observant Muslims cannot in practice be neatly explained in terms of *minkaohan* (Chinese-educated = secular) and *minkaomin* (Uyghur-educated = observant), as some assume, including many members of the Uyghur community itself. Interview data suggest rather that while some Uyghur-educated youths went to university and embraced secularism in the 2000s, some Chinese-educated

youths chose to embrace religion (Smith Finley 2013). It is particularly the Uyghur urban youth which has drawn on a wider variety of sources in order to define and celebrate its ethnic identity. One such source is transnational cosmopolitanism. In the early 2000s, a young musician named Arken Abdulla (the 'Uyghur Guitar King') provided a contemporary role model for Uyghur youth, as it began to move between regional and national boundaries, and then stepped across the national boundary altogether. Arken was one of the first artists to make 'the move beyond Uyghur tradition and the geographical boundaries of Xinjiang', immortalising this act with his first studio album *The Dolan Who Walked Out of the Desert* (*Zou chu shamo de Daolang*, 走出沙漠的刀郎), which title signalled his aspiration to 'connect to the rest of the world' (Baranovitch 2007: 70).[9]

This emerging cosmopolitanism among young Uyghurs should be regarded as both 'subaltern' and 'rooted' (or 'partial'). It is 'subaltern' because cosmopolitanism is never gender or ethnically neutral, in other words, cosmopolitan sociability cannot negate pre-existing social relationships of unequal power, such as that between Uyghurs and Han Chinese. It is also 'subaltern' because cosmopolitan openness is constrained by the particularities of the historical moment; by time, place and circumstance (Glick Schiller, Darieva and Gruner-Domic 2011: 411-13). It is 'rooted' or 'partial' because cosmopolitan sociability is embedded within practice-based identities, and can therefore be found only in social relationships that do not negate cultural, religious or gendered differences (Glick Schiller, Darieva and Gruner-Domic 2011: 403-4). For Uyghurs in urban Xinjiang, cosmopolitan sociability with other ethnic groups is influenced and limited by contestations over territory and culture, in a historical context of comparatively recent colonial domination

[9] The term Dolan refers to a people found in the Yarkand River valley, the Tarim River valley and the Lop Nur region of present-day Xinjiang. Though modern Dolan people now speak the vernacular dialect (usually Uyghur), the term refers to an earlier culture and civilization in the region. The history of this people is little known. Some scholars and travellers believe the Dolan of the Yarkand River valley to be a Kyrgyz or Kazakh group that settled in the area during the Qing Dynasty (Newby 2007).

(little more than two hundred years). They are therefore unlikely to enter into relationships of cosmopolitan sociability with Han Chinese. Instead, they have sought out peoples with whom they have 'experiential commonalities despite differences' (Glick Schiller, Darieva and Gruner-Domic 2011: 403). This helps to explain the fascination of contemporary Uyghur youth during the 2000s with the Flamenco culture of southern Spain, itself heavily influenced by North African Sufism, or with politically informed hip-hop in the US (Smith Finley 2011b). As one leading Uyghur folk musician put it: 'Some cultures are more alike than others' (Smith Finley 2013: 208).

Cosmopolitanism is often conceived as a threat to the nation-state; as sitting in opposition to national identity, and seeking to transcend the nation (Catterall 2011: 342). Its trans-border loyalties may be seen as 'treacherous', indeed, as a critique of nationalism itself (Schiller, Darieva and Gruner-Domic 2011: 401). In Xinjiang, where Uyghur continues to serve as the regional *lingua franca* despite the imposition of Chinese-medium education and increased levels of urban bi- and tri-lingualism, the popularity of Central Asian and Turkish songs (with vocals in Turkic-Altaic languages) derives from a sense of linguistic and cultural closeness. In the Uyghur-dominated Yan'anlu district in southeast Ürümchi, university students 'listened to music from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkey rather than from other regions of China' in 2005, while the district was fast becoming 'a cultural hotspot influenced primarily by the Turkic west' (Eri 2008: 77-78). This shared linguistic identity is one reason why Uyghur customers will normally choose imported Turkish chocolate over locally-produced Chinese chocolate, because it is labelled in the Latinised modern Turkish script and comprehensible to most Uyghurs, who retain familiarity with the *yengi yeziq* (the Latinised New Script in use before 1980) (Erkin 2009: 425-6). That said, the food shopping phenomenon is also attributable to a shared cultural and religious identity, particularly in the recent climate of revived piety. Uyghur customers are more likely to believe that Turkish

brands of chocolate are halal (permitted in the Islamic religion). In this way, 'branding, like national identity, trades upon familiarity, trust and aspiration' (Catterall 2011: 337).

In these cases, Uyghur identifications and aspirations are linked not to the bounded Chinese nation-state but to the trans-national pan-Turkic world. International football provides a further compelling example of pan-Turkic identification. During one World Cup, when China was required to play Turkey, Uyghurs in Ürümchi cheered the Turkish players, and were delighted when China lost, much to the irritation of Han classmates and work colleagues (Smith Finley 2013: 387). Such incidents fully demonstrate the importance of the notion of 'alternate centres' (Bequelin 2004: 377) as contemporary Uyghurs stress their alignments away from Beijing and towards Turkey and the Turkic cultural sphere. In another example of Uyghur identification with alternate centres, studies found that some students in Xinjiang would prefer to learn a different foreign language in place of Chinese (Schluessel 2007; Sunuodula 2015). Uyghur youngsters seemingly have no fear of the 'global advance of English,' seeing the threat to the Uyghur language as deriving rather from the 'hegemonic language culture' (Catterall 2011: 338) in their region, Chinese. Uyghur students' preference for foreign languages other than Chinese suggests an alternative set of cultural and political allegiances in defiance of the Chinese state requirement of minority group alignment with the Han centre.

In addition to cosmopolitan goods, sports, and foreign languages, many Uyghurs in Ürümchi seek to purchase real estate in ethnically Uyghur (Uy. *milliy*) districts of the city such as the Yan'anlu area. This preference does not reflect an inward-looking, culturally exclusive myopia; it is just that most consider the district to be 'more cosmopolitan' than other parts of Ürümchi. As one Uyghur university professor observed, foreigners and elements of foreign civilisations can be seen there, and 'modern ideas and fashions reach Yan'anlu first' (Erkin 2009: 425). It is Central Asian businessmen and the influx of Central

Asian cultural products they enable – not Chinese modernity – that is viewed as bridging the gap between Xinjiang and the modern outside world. The emerging Uyghur middle class enhances its identity with reference points from *outside* China rather than within (Erkin 2009: 420, 422). Another salient reference point for contemporary identifications is the Middle East. A fashion for belly-dancing emerged in Ürümchi since the end of the 1990s, and has spread to high-end Uyghur restaurants in Beijing and Shanghai. This new trend almost certainly emanated from the Arab world, which has become a major inspiration for some young Uyghurs, who see it as rich, modern, Muslim (therefore culturally close) and autonomous (Harris 2005). In this way, selective reception of global flows enables the evolution of a modern Uyghur culture and identity that orients itself towards the Turkic and Arab west, while Yan'anlu becomes the locus for a selective cosmopolitan modernity.

'Bilingual Education' and Uyghur Identity

One factor that has affected Uyghur ethnic identity in a variety of ways in contemporary times is Chinese state repression of the Uyghur language - the regional *lingua franca* in Xinjiang. The mother tongue has long been central to Uyghur ethnic identity (Smith 2000; Smith 2002, Dwyer 2005; Hess 2005; Schluessel 2007, 2009; Reny 2009). However, since 1995, China's state education policy in Xinjiang has steered away from accommodative pluralism and towards assimilative monoculturalism (Dwyer 2005; Schluessel 2007). In 2002, the Chinese government introduced the 'bilingual education' (*shuangyu jiaoyu* 双语教育) policy, where this term is a euphemism for the mandatory use of Mandarin Chinese (the language of the majority Han) as teaching medium in what were previously minority-language schools and classes (Schluessel 2007). The new policy abolished the 'separate-but-equal' parallel education system of the eighties and nineties, which had allowed Uyghur parents to choose the linguistic medium in which their children received tuition (Uyghur or

Chinese). By 2005, all minority-language schools and Chinese-medium schools in urban Xinjiang had been ‘consolidated’, with students from all nationalities taught together in one class (Schluessel 2007). Since then, Mandarin Chinese has been rapidly institutionalised as the sole medium of instruction in the region through higher, secondary, primary and kindergarten levels of education. A secondary impact of the policy has been to relegate foreign languages such as Russian, English and Japanese to the status of third language, with pupils required to study this third language through the medium of Mandarin Chinese (Sunuodula 2015).

A recent edited volume examines the relationship among language, education, and Uyghur identity in the post-2002 era, focusing on the patterns, effects and meanings of language use among contemporary urban Uyghurs (Smith Finley and Zang 2015). The contributions to this work, together with other studies (Smith 2002; Baki 2012; Smith Finley 2013), suggest that despite the recent accelerated institutionalisation of Mandarin Chinese, many Uyghurs continue to prefer the use of the mother tongue in all but the professional realm (i.e. occasions when they must converse with Han co-workers). In a context in which a majority of Uyghurs considers their mother tongue to be the central aspect of their identity and inviolable, the bilingual education policy has been perceived as ‘linguicide’ or ‘linguistic genocide’ (the forced extinction of the minority language) and as a direct attack on Uyghur identity (Dwyer 2005; see also Yee 2005; Schluessel 2007).

Yet Uyghur objections to bilingual education do not mean an outright rejection of learning Mandarin. In fact, opinions among Uyghur parents concerning the pros and cons of an education in the mother tongue versus an education in Mandarin have been divided since at least the 1990s. While some Uyghurs view their mother tongue as intimately bound up with Uyghur identity and a cultural property to be defended, other Uyghurs are more instrumentally driven, and think strategically in terms of the potential socio-economic

constraints associated with exclusively speaking the mother tongue versus the corresponding benefits of learning Mandarin (Benson 2004; Reny 2009). These strategic thinkers believe that Uyghurs 'must compete with the Chinese on their terms', and consider a Chinese-medium education essential for promoting Uyghur identity *from within the system* (Rudelson 1997). Nonetheless, it seems clear that most parents would have preferred to at least retain the choice over medium of education. Few Uyghurs would describe themselves as actively choosing to 'acculturate' to Han culture; in their own words, they make a pragmatic decision to accommodate to the prevailing system. Via a process Schluessel (2007: 270) termed 'instrumental acceptance', they opt to use Mandarin Chinese as a tool to improve their life chances and to further personal (and, by extension, group) interests, while continuing to express their separate ethnic identity through certain patterns of language use.

Identity and authenticity: 'real' versus 'fake' Uyghurs

The fact of Chinese as sole medium of education across all levels of schooling since 2005, combined with a Han-centric curriculum and increased interaction with Han Chinese pupils in the school milieu, raises the question of cultural authenticity of the Uyghur youth trained under that system. According to Vannini and Williams' (2009) social constructionist theory of authenticity, negotiation of the 'authentic' is a flexible and powerful scheme of evaluation, which involves boundary-making and has direct implications for the shaping of in- and out-group processes. Thus, definitions of what is – or is not – culturally 'authentic' can affect sub-group relationships within the Uyghur ethnic group as well as relationships between Uyghurs and other groups.

Minkaohan (Uyghurs educated in Mandarin Chinese) can be loosely divided into four groups, emerging within different political and socio-cultural environments since 1949. The first group, schooled in the 1950s-1960s, appears to have got on reasonably well with the first

generation of Han Chinese who settled in Xinjiang. While newly appointed Uyghur cadres learned Chinese, many Han newcomers attained at least functional fluency in the Uyghur language, and nearly all abstained from cultural practices outlawed in Islamic practice, such as consumption of pork (Smith 2002; Taynen 2006). This early cohort of *minkaohan* was well placed to form a bridge between Chinese administrators and local people.

The second group was the product of repression of minority languages and cultures during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Few Uyghur schools remained open during this period, and most Uyghur children in urban areas were forced to attend Han schools (Dreyer 1976). There, they were taught in the Chinese language, which subsequently became their first language – that they were most comfortable using - if not their mother tongue. The Arabic script, used by the Uyghurs since their conversion to Islam (and known to contemporary Uyghurs as the Old Script, *kona yeziq*), was discontinued in favour of the New Script (*yengi yeziq*) based on the Latin alphabet (Bellér-Hann 1991; Dwyer 2005). The experience of this generation of *minkaohan* was characterised by an acute sense of schizophrenia; a lack of belonging, either to the Chinese social world to which they were expected to assimilate, or to their own people among whom they felt themselves 'fakes' (Smith Finley 2007a).

The third group grew up during the climate of conciliatory minority policies of the 1980s and accelerated Han migration to Xinjiang across the 1990s. For this third wave, there was an element of parental choice regarding medium of education, albeit within an ethnically stratified socio-economic environment that seemed to point to only one course of action. The decision taken by some urban Uyghur parents during these decades to school their children in Chinese derived from a desire to increase their children's education and employment opportunities. The *minkaohan* of the 1980s and 1990s received a solid early education in the home environment, where they spoke Uyghur and absorbed Uyghur socio-cultural practices.

On reaching school age they went to Chinese-medium schools, where Chinese gradually replaced Uyghur as their first language and they were exposed to Chinese notions of culture. The transfer affected individuals in different ways, producing a myriad of 'types' on a broad spectrum of hybrid cultural combinations. For some, the experience produced a - temporary or permanent - sense of shame regarding their minority background, and a sense of cultural lack, as it had for second-generation *minkaohan*. Others, however, enjoyed more positive identities, considering themselves 'modern', 'progressive' and 'internationalist'. Often, this third group of *minkaohan* experienced all of these emotions, at once or at different moments. Crucially, most left education and entered adult life to find that their partial sinicisation earned them only partial entrance to the sphere of Han privilege, with access increasing in proportion to the degree of sinicisation, but not guaranteed. At the same time, the two worlds they spanned were fundamentally divided by the inter-ethnic tensions that characterised 1990s Xinjiang, and they were considered neither (wholly) Uyghur by *minkaomin* (Uyghurs educated in Uyghur) nor wholly Chinese by the Han.

From the 1990s, speaking Chinese as one's first language came to be perceived as a 'minus' by some sections of the Uyghur community, who viewed this status as equal to linguistic and cultural 'dilution' (Taynen 2006; Smith Finley 2007a). *Minkaohan* stood accused of possessing incomplete knowledge of the Uyghur language and culture, and even of becoming 'quasi-Hans' (Smith 1999; Schluessel 2007). Labelled 'Xinjiang's 14th nationality' (Smith Finley 2007a: 229) by some, *minkaohan* became the preferred scapegoats of the *minkaomin* community and often the butt of jokes; some even saw *minkaohan* as potential collaborators, 'traitors' and 'sell-outs' (Taynen 2006; Smith 2007a). Meanwhile, the superior status of the Uyghur mother tongue was symbolically underlined by the frequent sight of a Uyghur offering apologies to an ethnic peer after mistakenly addressing them in Chinese (Smith 1999; Smith 2002; Taynen 2006). In Beijing, too, a similar language

hierarchy has been observed among minority students; there, *minkaomin* have tended to consider *minkaohan* as only loosely representative of their ethnic group, causing *minkaohan* in Beijing to experience a 'torn identity' (Hasmath 2011).

A Chinese-medium education has been shown to exert certain psychological effects on *minkaohan* Uyghurs. Scholars report, for instance, that when growing up in a predominantly Uyghur neighbourhood, individuals tended to be academically confident and socially well-adjusted. However, if an individual grew up in a mainly Han neighbourhood, they were more likely to be quiet, withdrawn and uncertain about taking the lead in activities with Han children (Taynen 2006). *Minkaohan* often felt isolated in the Han classroom, slow to follow the jokes and banter (in Chinese) of Han peers. Inhabiting an uncomfortable middle ground, they contended with levels of ethnic discrimination not encountered by *minkaomin*, who studied in the linguistic and cultural safety of Uyghur-medium classes (Taynen 2006; Smith Finley 2007a). One *minkaohan* father, who claimed it had taken him years to feel secure and capable, described the Chinese-medium classroom as 'soul-destroying' for Uyghur children (Taynen 2006: 53-54). The situation was equally unbearable when *minkaohan* returned to a Uyghur cultural environment. Put in a situation where they were expected to demonstrate Uyghur linguistic or cultural knowledge, many *minkaohan* felt trepidation and fear (Smith Finley 2007a; Eri 2008). Because they tended to be more articulate and comfortable using Chinese, they would shift easily between Chinese and their mother tongue. This frequent code-switching fed mistrust among *minkaomin*, and created a social barrier between the two (Taynen 2006; Smith Finley 2007a). Taynen cites a typical example of one Uyghur woman, who declined to dance at a Uyghur wedding because she felt she did not know how to dance 'correctly'; other guests took offence at this, viewing the woman's refusal as a social 'slight' (2006: 56). In response to their experience of double prejudice from Han and Uyghur communities, some *minkaohan* began to form a 'third

community', while others remained the 'perpetual outsider observing other people's cultures' (Taynen 2006: 46, 56).

The fourth group are receiving their education in the post-2002 era, during which Mandarin Chinese has been – so far as possible - standardised as the sole medium of education across Xinjiang. Given that all children will now ostensibly be *minkaohan*, we might have expected that the stigma attached to that label and status will gradually fade, at least among the youth generation. Taynen (2006) noted that *minkaohan* children were irresistibly drawn to Chinese movies, TV shows, comic books, and music. Eri similarly observed that the growing popularity of Uyghur performers singing lyrics in Chinese to Uyghur-style music symbolises 'the current social expectation for young Uyghurs to be fluent in Mandarin at the same time as being proud to be Uyghur' (2008: 78). Such developments may however be received with horror by the older generations. For example, Uyghur folk musicians tend to see any musical innovation, such as a new style of playing the *tämbur* introduced by Nurmuhämmät Tursun (Harris 2005) or the fusion of Uyghur sounds with the *rumba flamenca* gypsy style (Smith Finley 2013), as a shocking deviation from authenticity that must necessarily have resulted from Chinese influence. Their horror reflects core anxieties around the survival of Uyghur culture and identity in an environment increasingly dominated by the Han language and culture. Yet despite these growing concerns within the Uyghur community, it is increasingly clear that a Chinese-medium education does not have to lead to deep acculturation. Young Uyghurs can - and often do - emerge with multi-lingual and multi-cultural proficiency, while continuing to identify themselves solidly as Uyghur. Indeed, the desire to learn Uyghur and deepen one's knowledge of Uyghur language and culture is far more important than proficiency itself; so long as one has the *will* to protect the Uyghur ethnic identity, then one is normally accepted as an upstanding and honourable member of the community.

Social inequality and Uyghur identity

While young urban Uyghurs have become increasingly proficient at negotiating multiple languages and cultures, this proficiency has not improved their experience in an ethnically stratified labour market that is disposed to discriminate against them on the basis of ethnicity alone. Already the case in the wake of the Ghulja disturbances in 1997 (see Millward 2004), this is increasingly true of the period since the 2009 inter-ethnic riots in Ürümchi. Poor labour market outcomes, including rising unemployment and under-employment, constitute an important reason for the growth and persistence of Uyghur dissatisfaction. At their heart is ethnically informed hiring discrimination, understood within a framework of relative deprivation. While it is true that economic development has, comparatively speaking, boomed in urban Xinjiang, with a per capita GDP of 28,000-30,000 Chinese yuan in 2011 (Momtazee and Kapur 2013), and a regional GDP growth rate of 12% in 2012 (China Briefing 2013), Uyghurs are increasingly denied equal access to employment opportunities. This trend has worsened in direct proportion to the social perception among Han Chinese that Uyghurs are 'ingrates' who failed to fulfil their duty as PRC citizens to uphold nationality unity and national unification (Smith Finley 2011a).

In the early-mid 1990s, *minkaomin* had faced job discrimination on the basis of insufficient fluency in the Chinese language, whereas *minkaohan* had been 'significantly better equipped to succeed economically' (Taynen 2006: 47, 54-55). After the 1997 Ghulja disturbances, however, *minkaohan* also began to be disadvantaged, as Uyghur applicants were rejected solely on the basis of their ethnicity (Smith Finley 2007a; 2013). It was common to see this caveat in the text of job advertisements in Xinjiang: 'The above-described post is restricted to ethnic Han applicants' (Ch. *yishang zhaopin xian Hanzu*, 以上招聘限汉族) (Uyghur Human Rights Project 2012, 3-6). Moreover, Maurer-Fazio, Hughes

and Zhang (2007) provided quantitative data showing that Uyghur men had been badly affected, with the percentage of working-age males in employment falling dramatically from 80% to 60% between 1990 and 2000. Even where Uyghurs have been able to secure employment, they are often faced with poor or unequal progression opportunities. Relegated to lower administrative positions from which there is no hope of upward mobility (Taynen 2006), or passed over for promotions, they watch as Han colleagues ascend within the hierarchy. Zang (2011, 2012) reported a substantial gap in income between Uyghur workers and Han workers in regional capital Urümchi. In response to this workplace discrimination, many *minkaohan* came to feel they had sacrificed their language, culture and ethnicity to gain socio-economic advantages that did not materialise (Taynen 2006), while the Uyghur community as a whole has experienced a strengthened ethnic awareness on the basis of perceptions of social inequality and injustice. This is perhaps particularly true of those Uyghurs of the so-called 'Xinjiang Class', who completed their education in Mandarin in the eastern cities of China proper, but are nonetheless routinely treated like criminals or terrorists by the Han public. Far from turning neatly into patriotic Chinese citizens, many abandon secularism to embrace Islam, and abandon Xinjiang for employment with foreign companies based in China's inland cities or abroad (Grose 2015).

State securitisation, insecurity and Uyghur identity

In response to what it sees as a rising Uyghur ethno-national and religious consciousness since the early 1990s, the Chinese government has carried out multiple and increasingly draconian 'Strike Hard' campaigns in face of 'the three evils' of separatism, terrorism, and religious extremism (Dwyer 2005; Fuller and Lipman 2004; Hess 2009; Hyer 2006; Rudelson and Jankowiak 2004). Since the Ürümchi riots in 2009, these campaigns have further developed into a full onslaught against Islam itself, with ordinary everyday practices such as

veiling, the growing of beards, and fasting during the Qurban festival outlawed, and an often surreal state programme of enforced secularization. However, repressive and punitive policies, enforced in a bid to 'securitise' Xinjiang, seem to have made the region less rather than more secure. Since 2013, state-sponsored violence in the form of police intrusion into the Uyghur domestic sphere has been met by Uyghur violence in Xinjiang on numerous occasions. For example, in July 2014, riots began after Uyghurs attacked a police station and government offices in Yarkand, prompting police to fire at the crowd, leaving almost 200 people dead. One local Uyghur official later indicated that the clashes had been triggered by restrictions imposed during Qurban, including house-to-house police searches and checks on Uyghur women's headscarves. Another pointed to the police shooting of a Uyghur family of five on July 18 after a policeman was injured during a quarrel triggered by police screening of headscarves at the family's home.

In the wake of ever tighter restrictions on religion, violence has spread beyond the Xinjiang region, in part because some Uyghurs have been forced to flee after getting into political trouble related to religious practice. Two incidents – the Tian'anmen crash in 2013 and the knife attack at Kunming rail station in 2014 - were especially significant in touching civilian victims in China proper for the first time, although the attacks were unsophisticated and did not bear the hallmarks of international terrorism. The Kunming case enraged many ethnic Han observers, triggering a continuous flood of anti-Islamic racism on the internet and social media, where the code word 'green' now indicates Islam in a pejorative sense. For its part, China has accelerated its ongoing crackdown and launched an all-out anti-terror campaign. Against this backdrop, some scholars of Uyghur studies (Clarke 2015; Kanat 2016; Zenz and Leibold 2017) are now absorbed by questions such as whether (or not) violent incidents of the past few years may be considered premeditated terror attacks; whether there are proven links between Uyghurs dissatisfied with China's domestic policies

and the radical Islamist ideologies of international terrorist organisations like Al-Qaeda or Islamic State (IS); the extent to which violent incidents represent a cry of desperation from individuals who have nothing left to lose; the extent to which these events are the natural conclusion of 'colonisation with Chinese characteristics'; and, crucially, how far the increased violence is the consequence of increased state securitisation.[10] The first publications on this topic are now beginning to appear (Clarke 2015; Kanat 2016; Meyer 2016; Zenz and Leibold 2017).

~~and how far the increased violence is the consequence of increased state securitisation.~~

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[10] These were questions explored at a strategic workshop titled 'Securitisation, Insecurity and Conflict in Xinjiang, Northwest China', organised by Joanne Smith Finley, and held at Newcastle University on 3 October 2014. The Workshop was supported by the Newcastle University Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Newcastle Forum for Human Rights and Social Justice. An edited collection of papers presented at this meeting is forthcoming in 2018.

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